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## The gift of family

*Parents, adopted children celebrate togetherness*

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Record-Eagle/Douglas Tesner  
**Kyle Schmidt, 1, grins while waiting with new father Fred Schmidt and 3-year-old sister Breanna for adoption proceedings to begin in the 13th Circuit Court Family Division. Fred, wife Noreen and the children live in Traverse City. Twenty-five kids were adopted Tuesday on the fourth annual Michigan Adoption Day.**

TRAVERSE CITY — Cameras flashed and tears flowed as David and Toni Ferris' adoption of their three young grandchildren closed out Adoption Day at the new Robert P. Griffin Hall of Justice.

The Acme couple adopted their first child, Cicely, nearly 30 years ago, when she was 2 years old. Cicely, 32, died of a stroke the day after Christmas last year and since then the Ferrises have worked to adopt her three children.

"I was there when they were born, and we have been a huge part of their lives ever since," Toni Ferris said after the adoptions were finalized Tuesday. "I hope it adds security for them that they know they are safe and secure."

Jajaune, 8, and his identical twin sisters, Jenna and Jaylah, 4, smiled as they played with stuffed animals and balloons handed out to the 25 children whose adoptions were finalized as part of the fourth annual Michigan Adoption Day.

Michigan Supreme Court Justice Elizabeth Weaver, of Glen Arbor, attended the celebration and presided over the Ferris' adoptions.

"This is a special joy because it is bringing families together officially and legally," Weaver said. "If these children get the opportunity to have a stable and productive home ... they

will have the opportunity to discover and develop their individual unique worth. People who have a sense they are valuable are more likely to become law-abiding, productive citizens.”

The 13th Circuit Court Family Division and The Department of Human Services hosted a luncheon reception for the parents and children on the lower level of the court house after the adoptions were finalized.

Michigan Adoption Day was celebrated by adoptions or adoption fairs in 35 of Michigan's 83 counties, but Weaver stressed that there are still 4,000 children in foster care waiting to be adopted. During the four years that Michigan has celebrated Adoption Day, over 10,600 children have been placed in adoptive homes out of foster care, according to Michigan's Adoption Services Program.

Grand Traverse County's 25 adoptions were the most of any county in the state this year, said Family Court Judge David Stowe, who presided over the bulk of Tuesday's adoptions.

Michigan Adoption Day is celebrated as part of National Adoption Day, held on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. Michigan Adoption Day usually occurs on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving.

Over 114,000 children in the United States are in foster care waiting for a permanent home, according to [www.nationaladoptionday.org](http://www.nationaladoptionday.org).

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